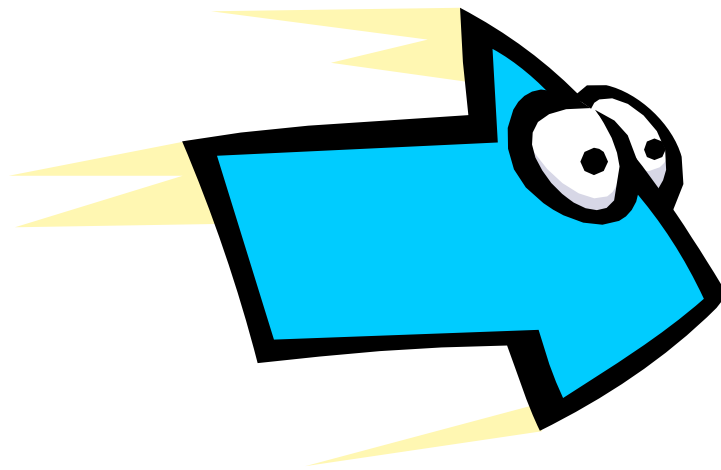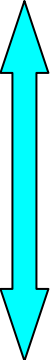# Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Introduction

The division-level Literacy Achievement Team developed the Literacy Classroom Look-fors in response to the division's work with the Teacher Performance Appraisal and Classroom Walkthroughs. These pages articulate the type of practice in which English language arts, ESOL, and special education teachers should engage as they plan and deliver literacy instruction.
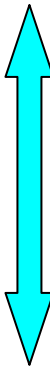
Each page is broken into two main sections: instructional practices and environmental support. In essence, teachers must create an environment of literacy both through instruction and through access to text and models.

Each major section is broken into two additional sections representing ends of a continuum on Bloom's taxonomy. The "low" category articulates those practices at the knowledge or comprehension level, while the "high" category articulates practices at the synthesis and evaluation levels.
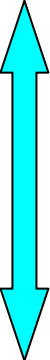
Appendix C

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Instructional Practices		Environmental Support
LOW ⟷ **HIGH**		**HIGH**

Text Structures		
Fill in blanks on a generic graphic organizer	Select from a variety of complex graphic organizers • Cause-effect • Compare/contrast • Sequence • Concept-definition • Problem-solution	
Webs	• Detailed outlines • Two-column (Cornell) notes • Structure-specific organizers	
Teacher-provided organizer (same for everyone)	Student-provided organizer (create your own)	
Same organizer all year	Multiple organizers to meet specific text structures	
Use organizers for reading OR writing	Use organizers to bridge reading AND writing	
Explain how a text is structured	Evaluate benefits of one organizational structure over another	
Identify a used structure	Evaluate & defend author's choice of structure for a story or for a student's own writing	
Identify elements/techniques of author's craft	Evaluate author's use of elements/techniques to advance a piece of writing & apply those techniques in student's own writing	
Taking all writing to fruition	Lots of starts & targeted lessons for various audiences & purposes	

Environmental Support (HIGH):
- Writing for a variety of purposes evidenced
- Target boards
- Crates/files from which students choose organizers
- Nonfiction in classroom library
- Newspapers & periodicals

Environmental Support (LOW):
- '5 Paragraph' poster on the wall
- Exemplar papers posted without specific criteria
- Discussion on plot or main idea in absence of structural questions
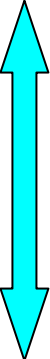- Classroom library restricted to fiction

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Instructional Practices		Environmental Support	
LOW ⟷ **HIGH**		**HIGH**	• Databases and other credible search engines linked on home page • Students using resources before asking for the answer • Learning community
Use of Resources			
Identify fact or opinion	Evaluate source bias, author bias, and overall credibility		
Find a source on a given topic	Evaluate the best sources for researching a given topic based on specific questions to be answered and credibility criteria		
Google	Use multiple databases, and types of print and online resources		
Use a computer search engine to "look up" information	Select sources based on pre-determined criteria (with rubric in hand)		
Find a word in a dictionary or thesaurus	Apply dictionary and thesaurus skills to gain information beyond spelling and 1st definition or synonym		
Use an encyclopedia	Evaluate information in an encyclopedia compared to other sources		• Computers in the classroom or library • Dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia on shelf • Teacher as resource for answers
Use sources to find interesting information	Use sources to find relevant, meaningful information		
Identify parts of a textbook	Synthesize text structures with other reference materials		
Write a Works Cited or Bibliography	• Defend use of a Works Cited or a Bibliography • Write an Annotated Bibliography indicating value of resources for specific purposes	**LOW**	

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Appendix C

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

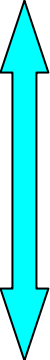| Instructional Practices		Environmental Support	
LOW ⟷ **HIGH**		**HIGH**	Word walls related to features, roots, or combining forms • Etymological questions for discussion
Vocabulary Instruction			
10 unrelated words for practice	Words for practice/instruction related through: • Spelling pattern • Vowel pattern • Word feature • Root • Affix		
Spelling quiz each week	Feature &/or meaning analysis		
Everyone has the same word list(s)	Word study related to students' individual needs	⇕	
Weakest students get the "easiest" words	All students hear and use precise, powerful vocabulary		
Vocabulary books	"Playing" with words		
Single sorts	Multiple and conceptual sorts		
Most common meaning	Explore multiple meanings through: • Context • Definitions • Background knowledge		• Random word walls (fun, interesting, big words) • Spelling list on board
Vocabulary instruction in language arts	Vocabulary instruction across disciplines		
Contextual vocabulary for interest	Contextual vocabulary for meaning		
Identify patterns & morphemes	Apply patterns and morphemic structure to decode and determine meanings of new words		
Definition of words	Etymology of words – explore vocabulary over time – how a word means	**LOW**	
Use a word from a text	Evaluate an author's use of language to convey meaning		

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Instructional Practices		Environmental Support	
LOW ⟷ **HIGH**		**HIGH**	Growth charts with target goal
Fluency			
Random practice	Daily practice • Pairs • SSR • Writing • Quick Writes • Writing Aerobics • In Other Words		
Students practice without knowing target	Charting growth to individualized target goal		
Whole class at same level	Each student at appropriate level based on diagnostic measures		
Oral fluency practice is inconsistent	Oral fluency practice is short – generally limited to one minute – and consistent each day Students record their own reading to hear progress over time		
Students read a variety of passages each week	Students read the same passage multiple times		
Teacher selects topics for writing	Students write to a variety of prompts and/or have choice in writing topic	**LOW**	

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Instructional Practices		Environmental Support
LOW ⟷	**HIGH**	**HIGH** / **LOW**
Word Study		
Random activities with words	Sequenced word activities • Pattern sorts • Feature sorts • Manipulating words • Categorizing • Concept sorts	• Word walls related to features, roots, or combining forms, morphemes • Word walls of related words • Etymological questions for discussion • Dictionaries in student spaces
Practicing spelling only	Feature &/or meaning analysis - morphology	
Rote memorization	Relating words to other words	
Isolated sentences	Transfer into student writing	
Whole class at same place	Students grouped based on diagnostic information	
Copying from the dictionary	Dictionary as a reference	• This week's words on board

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Instructional Practices		Environmental Support	
LOW ⟷ **HIGH**		HIGH	
Reading Comprehension			Classroom library / Writing about literature / Students having authentic and enthusiastic conversations about books
Worksheets	Graphic Organizers		• • •
Teacher-directed, whole-class discussion with single-student responses	Authentic Discussion • Small-group discussion • Socratic Seminar • Literature Circles • Write-arounds		
Round Robin/Popcorn Reading	Read-aloud/Think-aloud Literature Circles		
Multiple choice questions	• Somebody Wanted But So • Summarizing • GIST statements • Write-arounds • Story mapping • Writing		
Right-there questions	Questions that require • Text references • Inferences • Predictions • Visualization • Synthesis • Evaluation		
Students answering questions/responding to text without the text available	Students referencing text to strengthen their response		
Teacher sharing book talks	Students sharing Reading Minutes/Book Talks		
Minimal evidence of metacognitive process	Mini-lessons on reading strategies Evidence of metacognitive process: • Sticky notes on text • Logographic cues • Text connections • Reading rubrics	LOW	Movie posters / silence • •

Literacy Classroom Look-fors

Instructional Practices		Environmental Support	
LOW ⟷ **HIGH**		**HIGH**	
Writing			
Sporadic writing practice	Daily writing practice (with date on writing)		• Fluid student writing postings – always changing
Taking all writing to fruition	Multiple starts, targeted mini-lessons, prompts, choice to write for a variety of audiences and purposes, works in progress		• Students respond to posted peer writing • Target boards • Collections and portfolios in student spaces • Discussion about writing and the writing process
Teacher mandate	Student choice and ownership		
Writing in isolation	Writing in community • Peer conferences • Author sharing • Student-teacher conferences • Peer revision • Peer editing		
Recopying	• Authentic revision • Reflection on changes among drafts (blogs, journals, author statements) • Discussion & application of author's craft		
Teacher does the editing	Ratiocination Peer editing Calibrated Peer Review		• Standard '5 paragraph' poster • Writing posted for extended periods of time
Collections	• Working folders • Portfolios for completed works • Showcase portfolios with reflections		• Collections behind the teacher's desk • Silence
Holistic grading	Rubrics Targeted goals Mastery Ungraded pieces Calibrated Peer Review	**LOW**	